

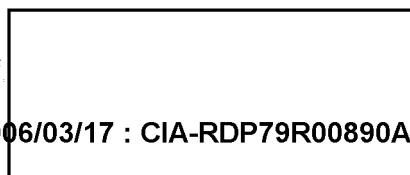
NSC BRIEFING

24 September 1958

TAIWAN STRAIT

- I. Communist artillery harassment of Chinmen continues.**
 - A. American observers report that there is not a safe place on the island.**
 - 1. Communist guns cease their harassing fires when a target of opportunity such as a convoy appears, and concentrate all fire on that target.**
 - 2. At least some of the newer and more effective artillery ammunition they are now using is of Soviet manufacture.**
 - B. A high level of naval activity has continued both to the north and south of the Strait area. Available intelligence, however, does not give us much specific knowledge of the nature of this activity.**
- II. The Chinese Communists continue to assert that they will take the offshore islands.**
 - A. Foreign Minister Chen Yi stated on 20 September that "no force on earth" can prevent Communist China from "recovering" Chinmen and Matsu.**
 - 1. Chen also declared that withdrawal of US forces from the Taiwan area rather than a cease fire is "precisely the urgent question" to be settled at the current Warsaw talks.**
 - 2. Peiping almost certainly believes that if the US calls for a cease fire gaining international support, its strong negotiating position will be undercut.**

NSA, NAVY, State & PACOM reviews completed



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B. Peiping continues to number its warnings against the "intrusions" of US naval and air forces, issuing its 13th such warning on 24 September.

- 1. The Communists are clearly attempting to demonstrate that US actions are frequent and are the cause of tensions which will subside only after the cessation of numerous "provocations" rather than by a mutually agreed on cease-fire.**
- 2. As in all other warnings, there is no threat of counteraction.**

- 3. [redacted] the continued numbering of warnings without taking action to enforce them is received in the Arab world as a sign of weakness.**

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C. Recently, Peiping has increased its pressure on Hong Kong by deliberate provocations.

- 1. Enforcement of the 12-mile limit would seriously restrict access to the port by both sea and air. [redacted]**

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- 2. To avoid overflights of waters claimed by the Communists would cause serious difficulties in operating the airlines into Hong Kong and the traffic patterns over the city. There is an unconfirmed report of Communist fighter activity in the Taiwan-Hong Kong lane.**

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3. Communist-directed Chinese will probably stage anti-Chinat demonstrations on the anniversary days of 1 and 10 October which could result in violence between Communist and Nationalist sympathizers.
 4. These actions may be intended to maintain pressure on the British in an effort to prevent strong UK support for the US position on the offshore islands issue.
- D. Peiping for the first time in recent months has shown the first glimmer of realization of the meaning of nuclear attack.
1. The authoritative People's Daily on 21 September stated "We know very well the immense destructive power of atomic weapons."
 2. Although the editorial again boasted that "people not weapons" are decisive in war, it declared that a nuclear attack on the mainland would result in an attack on the US "by the same means."
 3. The passage on retaliation is attributed by them to Khrushchev, suggesting that Communist China does not possess nuclear weapons of its own.
- E. The Chinese Communists are also moderating their earlier threats against the US.
1. The above editorial states that 600,000,000 Chinese will only fight "if" the US should "impose war on us."
 2. This line is carried even further in another major newspaper two days later which announced that "Our stand is: We will never attack unless attacked; if attacked, we will certainly counterattack," and "we have never intended to fight with the US."

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- III. Moscow's reaction to the US rejection of Khrushchev's letter has thus far been mild and has been largely limited to charges that the action violates the "uses and customs of diplomatic relations." One paper called the rejection a "diplomatic provocation." There has been no official response.**
- IV. While Moscow has not yet moved to raise the Taiwan Strait issue in the UN, Soviet propaganda has called it the "most urgent" problem facing the current UN General Assembly session.**
- A. In the debate over including in the Assembly's agenda the Indian item on Chinese representation, Gromyko rejected the "two Chinas" theory, sharply attacked US "armed intervention," and accused Britain of "playing a double game" by supporting the moratorium.**
- V. Despite the belligerency of the USSR's public position the American embassy in Moscow reports that the Taiwan Strait crisis has not given rise to the signs of popular apprehension in the USSR which were observed during the Middle East crisis last summer.**
- A. Western diplomats in Moscow generally hold the view that the Soviet leadership does not want or even expect war to develop from the present crisis.**
- 1. There are still no indications that the USSR has made any military moves related to the Straits situation.**

VI. Chinese Nationalist objectives in the present crisis are believed to be as follows:

- A. To induce the United States to increase its commitments to assure the defense of the offshore islands.**
- B. To bring about US military involvement with Peiping in support of the eventual Nationalist return to power on the mainland.**

VII. Thus there exists a continuing danger that the Chinese Nationalists might take unilateral military action against the mainland. Individual pilots or flight leaders might also take independent provocative action.

- A. The likelihood of such action would increase if the supply situation on the offshore islands becomes desperate and/or a political solution to the crisis is advanced which the Nationalists believe would be damaging to their interests.**
- B. In conversations with Admiral Felt and Ambassador Drumright on 23 September Chiang Kai-shek stressed the need to solve the convoy problem within two weeks and indicated that if Tatan and Erktan islands were attacked the Nationalists would employ all resources to meet the attack,**

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3. The Nationalists have made public their opposition to the Warsaw talks and have warned both privately and publicly that they will not accept a cease fire involving any concessions or loss of "an inch" of their territory.

B. [redacted] a recent resolution by the Taiwan Provincial Assembly completely endorsing the Nationalist policy toward the offshore islands was "railroaded" through by the Kuomintang. Privately, members of this predominantly native Taiwanese body indicate that their opinions differ from the stand taken.

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1. The native Taiwanese probably genuinely support efforts to resupply the offshore islands, because over 50 percent of the troops on them are Taiwanese. But it is likely that in contrast to the mainlanders they would be more favorably inclined toward such measures as evacuation or demilitarization of the islands.

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